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Committees
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The Jacobs Report

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MICHIGAN LOSES UNDER NEW U.S. TRANSIT BILL

Governor Jennifer Granholm and her colleagues from 11 other so-called donor states slammed a federal plan that would hold Michigan's return on federal transportation taxes to just over 90 cents per dollar. H.R. 3550 was approved last week by the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, prompting a joint letter from Democratic and Republican "donor state" governors to U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert protesting inequities promoted by the bill.

Concurrently, Transportation Director Gloria Jeff wrote members of Michigan's congressional delegation urging them to oppose the bill, which she called inadequate to meet the state's transportation needs. Even worse, she said the bill may actually give less federal funds to the state than it currently receives.

Passage of H.R. 3550 was a major blow to Michigan's state and federal officials, who have made a major commitment to increasing Michigan's return.

"Michigan would suffer a greater inequity under this bill," said Governor Granholm. "It has serious impacts for Michigan and other donor states if the rate of return issue and other flaws in the bill are not addressed. We have an obligation to provide Michigan citizens with a 21st century transportation system that meets our state's economic, mobility, safety, and security needs. It will not allow us to give the taxpayers of Michigan the quality transportation system they deserve."

In her letter, Ms. Jeff urged Michigan House members to hang tough. "I very much appreciate your sincere commitment to improving Michigan's return on the transportation dollars it sends to Washington. The progress we've made so far however, is in serious jeopardy. If TEA LU is approved in its current form at the \$275 billion funding level, Michigan's federal transportation funding equity problem will worsen during the next six years."

CIVIL RIGHTS PETITION TOSSED

An Ingham County judge ruled on a technicality, dealing a significant setback to the drive to put an anti-affirmative action initiative before Michigan voters this November.

Circuit Court Judge Paula Manderfield returned the ballot proposal to the State Board of Canvassers, ruling that new language in the initiative "flies in the face" of phraseology already in the Constitution.

In a 19-page decision, Manderfield blamed the State Board of Canvassers for missing the conflict.

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“The Michigan State Board of Canvassers has breached their duty in approving MCRI's petition,” she wrote. “To find otherwise would reduce the function of the State Board of Canvassers to a mere rubber stamp.”

Manderfield took exception to the MCRI's phrase “The state shall not discriminate, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual.”

She said this language directly conflicts with Art. 1, section 2 of the Michigan Constitution, which reads, “No person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws; nor shall any person be denied the enjoyment of his civil or political rights or be discriminated against in the exercise thereof because of religion, race, color or national origin.”

“A group has proposed an amendment which creates a ‘new’ section to the Michigan Constitution, yet boldly regurgitates language of an existing section, with moderate modifications,” she wrote.

The offices of Attorney General and Secretary of State—the agency that oversees the State Board of Canvassers—are reviewing the decision.

If the state wishes to appeal, the next logical step would be the state Court of Appeals.

“I would hope that when the judges are making their decisions on cases such as these, they are not deciding an outcome to benefit one particular group,” said Rep. Leon Drolet (R-Clinton Twp.), a MCRI co-chair. “I don't know if that is the case here, but I would be highly suspicious.”

If the decision stands, the campaign will have to start from scratch and begin gathering new signatures, a tough task this late in the election cycle.

ANTI-CIGARETTE TAX AXIS FORMS

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Retailers Association and Michigan Grocers Association announced last week that they have joined forces to oppose Governor Jennifer Granholm's proposed 75-cent per pack cigarette tax increase.

Also in the coalition: the Associated Food Dealers of Michigan, the Arab American Chamber of Commerce, Convenience Store Association of Michigan, Michigan Association of Convenience Stores, Michigan Distributors & Vendors Association, Michigan Licensed Beverage Association, Michigan Food and Beverage Association, Michigan Petroleum Association, Michigan Truck Stop Operators Association, Service Station Dealers of Michigan and 7 Eleven Incorporated.

DEMOCRATIC ICON PASSES AWAY

Millie Jeffrey, an influential Democratic activist since her days as a teenager, died Wednesday at the age of 93.

Mildred McWilliams Jeffrey was born in Alton, Iowa on December 29, 1911. Her grandmother ran the family farm and raised 16 children after losing her husband. Millie's mother raised seven children, became Iowa's first registered pharmacist, and remained determined that all her children would attend college.

Millie's fight for social justice began at age 17 when she joined the left-leaning Women's

International League for Peace and Freedom and the very liberal YWCA as a student at the University of Minnesota. She was exuberant, dynamic, tenacious, and, while diminutive in size, mighty in stature. During the next seven decades, she would fight tirelessly against exploitation and discrimination and for equality and opportunity.

After earning a masters degree from Bryn Mawr's Department of Social Economy and Social Research, she worked briefly as an investigator for the National Recovery Administration before accepting a job organizing for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America with fellow organizer Homer Newman Jeffrey, whom she married in 1936.

The Jeffreys traveled throughout the South, organizing textile workers until World War II, when they moved to Washington, D.C. to work as consultants to the War Labor Board. There they met the Reuther brothers; and in 1944, they moved to Detroit, where Millie accepted a job as director of the newly formed UAW Women's Bureau, as the first female UAW department head. In 1948, she began work on the Equal Rights Amendment.

Ms. Jeffrey's career with the UAW included management of the union's radio station, Community Relations Department, and Consumer Affairs Department, where she served from 1968 until her retirement in 1976.

In 1974, she was elected to the Wayne State University Board of Governors, an office she held for 16 years. As an original board member of the Michigan Women's Foundation and a founding member and chair of NOW's National Women's Political Caucus, she supported female candidates for political office.

After her retirement from the UAW, she continued to work on behalf of civil rights, workers' rights, women's rights, gay rights, education, health care, youth employment and recreation, earning numerous awards, commendations and distinctions.

She marched with the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.; advised UAW President Walter Reuther; counted Hubert Humphrey and Geraldine Ferrero among her good friends; and served on national commissions during the Kennedy and Carter administrations.

In 2000, her work was honored by then-President Bill Clinton when he presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award.

"You never win freedom permanently. You have to win it time after time...whether it's union rights, civil rights, or equality for women. We have to keep at it and at it."

-Millie Jeffery, 1911-2004

State Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield, and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Families & Human Services Committee and the Economic Development, Small Business & Regulatory Reform Committee. She also serves on the Government Operations and Health Policy Committees.

Constituents of the 14th District may contact Senator Jacobs at sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov or toll-free at 1-888-937-4453.

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